MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

NEWS
Survey on kids and cell phones
p5

ANIMALS
Amazing songbird siblings
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HOW TO
Bake up cookies to swap
p24

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Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

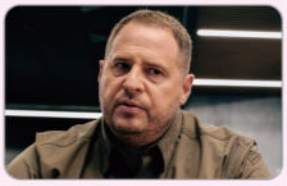
SUPER SLOTHS

Discover how these adorable tree dwellers live life in the slow lane p12

DID YOU KNOW?
Russia is the largest country in Europe, and Ukraine is the second-largest. They share a 1,240-mile land border.

Officials from the US and Ukraine meeting in Florida

A key resignation



Andriy Yermak (above), chief of staff to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, resigned on November 28 after being accused of plotting to steal money from the government. Yermak, who led peace talks for Ukraine, is the highest-level official to lose his job after an investigation into financial crimes in the nation.

Effort to end Ukraine war progresses

Officials from several nations, led by the US, are working to reach an agreement to end the war in Ukraine. The conflict began when Russia invaded its neighboring country in February 2022 in an attempt to take control of it.

What is happening?

In its role as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia, the US revealed a 28-point peace plan in November. That plan triggered a period of intense diplomatic activity. Initially, political experts said the plan favored Russia, but US officials met with Ukrainian officials in Switzerland on November 24 and Florida on November 30 to hear Ukraine's demands and refine the proposal. This included a discussion of how to keep Ukraine safe from any future aggression by Russia. On December 1 and 2, Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine, met with leaders of France, the UK, and other European countries to discuss their support for Ukraine. When *The Week Junior* went to press on December 2, US officials had arrived in Moscow, Russia's capital, to further negotiate the proposal with Vladimir Putin, the country's president. While the talks have been taking place, fighting has continued and Russia has heavily bombarded Ukraine with missiles.

Volodymyr Zelensky

What is in the peace proposal?

The plan calls for an immediate ceasefire and for Ukraine to give up part of its country, including the regions of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk, which Russia now controls, as well as parts of Donetsk that are under Ukrainian control. Ukraine firmly refuses to retreat from land that it controls and is only willing to discuss giving up land currently held by Russia. But Russia is refusing to back down on taking over that land. "If they don't withdraw, we'll achieve this by force of arms," Putin said.

What else is in the proposal?

Ukraine would have to agree not to join the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance of 32 nations created to defend against Russian aggression. NATO member nations provide military support to one another. Ukraine would also not be allowed to have NATO troops within its borders and would have to limit its military to 600,000 troops. The US would guarantee, however, that if Ukraine were invaded by Russia again, it would receive military support. Russia does not want Ukraine to join NATO or receive any security guarantees like this from the US or other allies. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU, a group of 27 nations) has suggested using Russian funds that were frozen in European banks to help rebuild Ukraine. Russia is expected to object to this.

How did people react?

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio described the meetings as "very productive" and said the goal of the peace plan was to end the fighting and leave Ukraine "sovereign, independent, and prosperous." Zelensky expressed gratitude to the US and said there were still some "tough issues" to work out. Rustem Umerov, the chief negotiator for Ukraine, said the US is "hearing us...supporting us...working beside us." Putin said the plan "could form the basis for future agreements" and he is ready for "serious" negotiations. European officials said they believe Putin is stalling, however, because Russia is making slow military advances and wants to seize more of Ukraine before agreeing to a peace plan. Emmanuel Macron, president of France, said Russia's ongoing attacks on Ukraine show that Russia isn't serious about ending the war. "The reality is the exact opposite of any genuine desire for peace," he said.

What will happen next?

When *The Week Junior* went to press, US and Russian officials were still meeting behind closed doors in Moscow. Russia claimed to have taken over the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, but that was not confirmed. Meanwhile, at a speech to leaders in Ireland, Zelensky said, "Now, more than ever, there is a chance to end this war."

Most populated cities are named

Jakarta, Indonesia, is the world's most populous city, with 42 million inhabitants, according to a recent report by the United Nations (UN, a group of 193 countries). Dhaka, Bangladesh, is second with nearly 40 million people, and Tokyo, Japan, is ranked third, with a population of 33 million people. Nine of the top 10 cities are in Asia.

This marks a major change from the last report. That study, issued in 2018, found that Jakarta was 33rd, with about 10.5 million people, while Tokyo was first, with about 37.5 million people. The change is due to a recent adjustment in the UN's methodology, which allowed for more consistent counting of populations across different countries.

According to the report, populations have become increasingly urban, with 45% of the world's 8.2 billion people living in cities. The UN hopes policymakers and researchers can use the data to improve the quality of life in urban centers by focusing on issues including housing, sanitation, and public transportation.

Jakarta

The torch-lighting ceremony in Greece

SYMBOL OF VICTORY
Instead of a medal, winners at the ancient Olympic Games received a crown made from olive branches.

Olympic torch relay begins

The Olympic torch was lit in a ceremony in Olympia, Greece, the historic birthplace of the Olympic Games, on November 26. It will be carried in a relay from Greece to Italy, arriving in Milan for the opening ceremony of the 2026 Milan-Cortina Games on February 6. This year's torch was designed to reflect the landscape of Italy and represent movement, hope, and transformation.

Inspired by the ancient Greek Olympics, the torch was first used in modern times at the 1928 Summer Games in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The flame is traditionally lit by a woman dressed as a Greek priestess, who uses a mirror to focus the Sun's rays and ignite the flame.

Greek rower Petros Gkaidatzis began the relay, passing the flame to Italian cross-country skier Stefania Belmondo. Next, more than 450 torchbearers carried the flame over nine days through 36 Greek towns, ending in Athens. From there, the flame headed to Rome. It will be carried 7,500 miles across Italy by 10,001 torchbearers, including athletes, coaches, and citizens.

The last torchbearer, typically a prominent person in the host country, will light the Olympic cauldron at the opening ceremony. It will stay lit until the closing ceremony on February 22. The torch for the Paralympic Games will be lit and carried across Italy from February 24 until the opening ceremony on March 6.

"The flame we light today carries not just the hopes of the athletes but the dreams of all of those who believe in the power of sport," Kirsty Coventry, president of the International Olympic Committee, said at the lighting ceremony.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A SWEET TRIBUTE

Krispy Kreme has released five holiday doughnuts honoring the classic *Peanuts* comic strip on its 75th anniversary. Among the tasty treats are tributes to Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and Woodstock.

The doughnuts

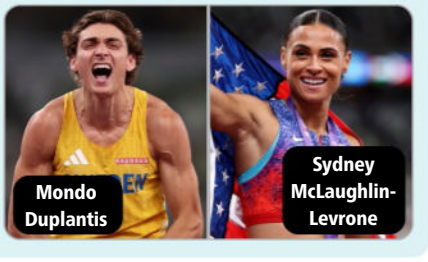
Soleil

A WINNING DOG

Soleil, a Belgian sheepdog, beat out 1,900 competitors to take home the top prize of Best in Show at the National Dog Show in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on Thanksgiving Day. "Soleil loves the energy, and she feels it," her handler said. "That's her magic."

ATHLETIC HONORS

Mondo Duplantis, a pole vaulter from Sweden, and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, a US sprinter, were named World Athletes of the Year at a track and field awards ceremony in Monaco. "I have a lot of joy that I hope to spread on the track," he said. "Track and field is...the best sport in the world," she said.


Mondo Duplantis

Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone

ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES (3); PLAYTONIC FRIENDS; JOY HOWARD; ON THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (5); KRISPY KREME; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

GLOBAL ATTRACTION
Nearly 15% of people who visited Yellowstone National Park in 2024 were from outside the US.

A view of Yellowstone National Park

A remote park

Alaska's Gates of the Arctic (above) is one of the most remote US parks. It has no roads, trails, or permanent visitor facilities and can be reached only by small aircraft or by hiking. Rugged peaks, glaciated arctic valleys, and wild rivers characterize the park, which is nearly 200 miles long and 130 miles wide.

National parks to change fee structure

The National Park Service (NPS) announced that it will begin charging visitors from outside the US higher fees to enter 11 national parks, including some of the most visited locations.

What happened?

The NPS is implementing what it's calling an "America first" policy. In addition to standard entrance fees, tourists who are not US residents will pay $100 to visit these national parks: Acadia, Bryce Canyon, Everglades, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion. Annual park passes will increase to $250 for international tourists but remain at $80 for US residents. On certain days, such as Memorial Day, US residents will now be able to visit the parks at no cost.

Why were the changes made?

Doug Burgum, secretary of the Department of the Interior, which includes the NPS, said the changes will keep parks affordable for US residents who support the NPS through their taxes and ensure that "international visitors contribute their fair share." Revenue generated from the fees will be used to upgrade visitor facilities, repair roads, and provide essential maintenance. Other countries have similar policies. In Ecuador, for example, foreign visitors pay $200 to visit Galapagos National Park while Ecuadorians pay up to $30.

How did people react?

The Property and Environment Research Center, a nonprofit environmental group, said the fees could generate more than $50 million that could be invested into national parks. Small business owners, such as tour operators and restaurant owners, expressed concern that the higher fees could discourage international tourists from visiting the parks. If fewer people come to the parks, these businesses could struggle to earn money. One owner of a motel near Glacier National Park estimated that about 15% of his customers come from outside the US.

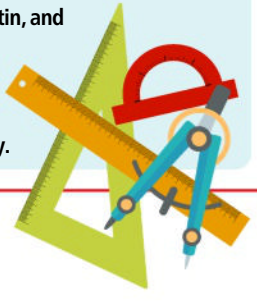
What will happen next?

The fees will take effect on January 1, 2026. Several Republican members of Congress (the branch of government that makes laws) have introduced a bill that would turn these fee changes into law, but lawmakers will need to vote on the legislation.

WORD OF THE WEEK

ARCHITECT

The word "architect," which describes someone who designs buildings, is based on two Greek words, *arkhi-* (meaning "chief") and *tektōn* (meaning "builder"). It journeyed through Greek, Latin, and French before entering the English language in the 16th century.

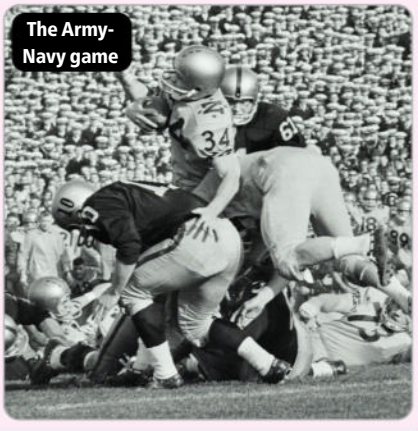


THE WEEK IN HISTORY

December 7, 1963

Instant replay debuts on television

On December 7, 1963, instant replay was used for the first time during a college football game between the US Army and the US Navy. Instant replay is when video footage is played back in slow motion. The technology's early hardware, the size of a refrigerator, enabled viewers to see a touchdown replayed. Today, the technology is a key part of how sports are broadcast.



The Army-Navy game

GETTY IMAGES (4); ON RIGHT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); DISNEY; SAN DIEGO ZOO

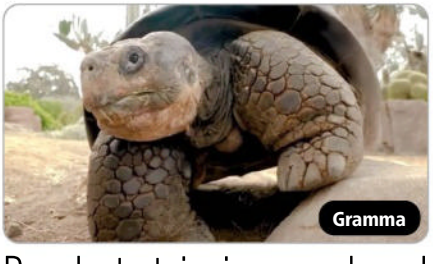
Inside the Red Room

White House decorations set

First Lady Melania Trump revealed the 2025 White House holiday display with the theme of "Home Is Where the Heart Is" on December 1. The East Wing was decorated in prior years, but because that portion of the White House was torn down this year to make way for a ballroom, the decorations were moved to other areas. The display includes 75 wreaths, 51 Christmas trees, more than 2,000 strands of lights, and over 25,000 feet of ribbon.

Movie breaks box office record

Zootopia 2, the animated sequel to Walt Disney Animation Studios' 2016 film *Zootopia*, was the biggest hit at the box office over the five-day Thanksgiving holiday, earning $156 million in the US and $556 million globally. It now holds the record for the highest international opening for an animated movie. *Wicked: For Good* came in second at the US holiday box office, bringing in about $93 million.


Gramma

Popular tortoise is remembered

A Galapagos tortoise named Gramma, the oldest resident of the San Diego Zoo in California, died on November 20. Her age was estimated at 141 years old. Gramma was born in her native habitat, and officials said that although it wasn't clear when she arrived at the zoo, it could have been in1928. Her sweet, shy personality delighted visitors, and her care specialists called her "the Queen of the Zoo."

At least 35 US states have some type of restriction on cell phone use in public schools.

Results of survey about kids and phones

The Week Junior announced the results of its survey about young people's use of phones and other digital devices. More than 700 children across the US, ages 8 to 14, took the survey, which was conducted with the polling firm YouGov.

When kids were asked to rate the amount of time they use their phone or device, 48% said they believe they use them the right amount. About 24% said they use their devices too much, while 13% said they don't use them very much. Among 13- and 14-year-olds, 21% said they have tried to use their phones less, compared to 6% of 8-year-olds who reported trying to reduce use.

When children were asked whether their device use is monitored, 38% of respondents said their parents set a time limit on their use. This was more common for kids ages 8 to 12 (40%) compared to ages 13 to 14 (32%). Kids also had opinions about their parents' use of phones or digital devices. More than a quarter (28%) felt their parents used them too much, and 27% said their parents have been distracted by their phone or device while talking to them. Eight-year olds were the most likely to say their parents have been distracted, at 34%.

Many schools across the US have banned the use of phones and digital devices during the day. Among the survey respondents, 66% said their school has a ban, with some specifying that there are exceptions in place. More than half of children (55%) view the bans as positive, including 21% who say the bans are very positive.

PARENT PERSPECTIVE
About 68% of parents said kids should be at least 12 years old before getting a smartphone, according to a Pew Research survey.

Gail Saltz, a psychiatrist in New York City, told *The Week Junior* she isn't surprised that a majority of young people support school phone bans. "Kids are hearing how important it is to limit time in front of screens," she said.

Saltz also offered advice for children who feel their parents use their devices too much. "A child could talk to their parent and say, 'I feel like you don't hear me because you're on your phone,'" she said, adding that kids and parents can brainstorm together to set rules about screen time that work for everyone in the family.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Coffee-stealing parrot captured at South Korean cafe" *UPI*

METHODOLOGY: ALL FIGURES, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ARE FROM YOUGOV PLC. TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE WAS 708 CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 8-14. FIELDWORK WAS UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN 9TH - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025. THE SURVEY WAS CARRIED OUT ONLINE. THE FIGURES HAVE BEEN WEIGHTED AND ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF CHILDREN AGED 8 TO 14.

Around the world

Paddington the Musical

London, United Kingdom
Paddington musical is a hit

A new musical adapted from the *Paddington* books and movies has opened in London's West End. *Paddington the Musical* follows the beloved bear as he arrives from Peru and is adopted by a UK family. Performer Arti Shah appears in costume as Paddington, while James Hameed voices the bear and controls its facial expressions from backstage. Critics praised the show's premiere, calling it a "gorgeous world of bearish adventure."

Families at a shelter

Kertala, Sudan
Thousands flee fighting

About 1,625 people fled the town of Kertala on November 28, according to the International Organization for Migration. Sudan is in the midst of a civil war (conflict between groups within a country), with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and other groups fighting the Sudanese army. Since 2023, about 12 million people have fled their homes. The most recent departures were attributed to RSF attacks in the area.

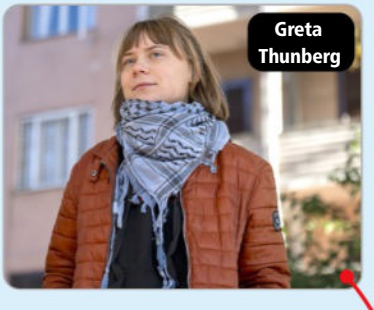
The nebula

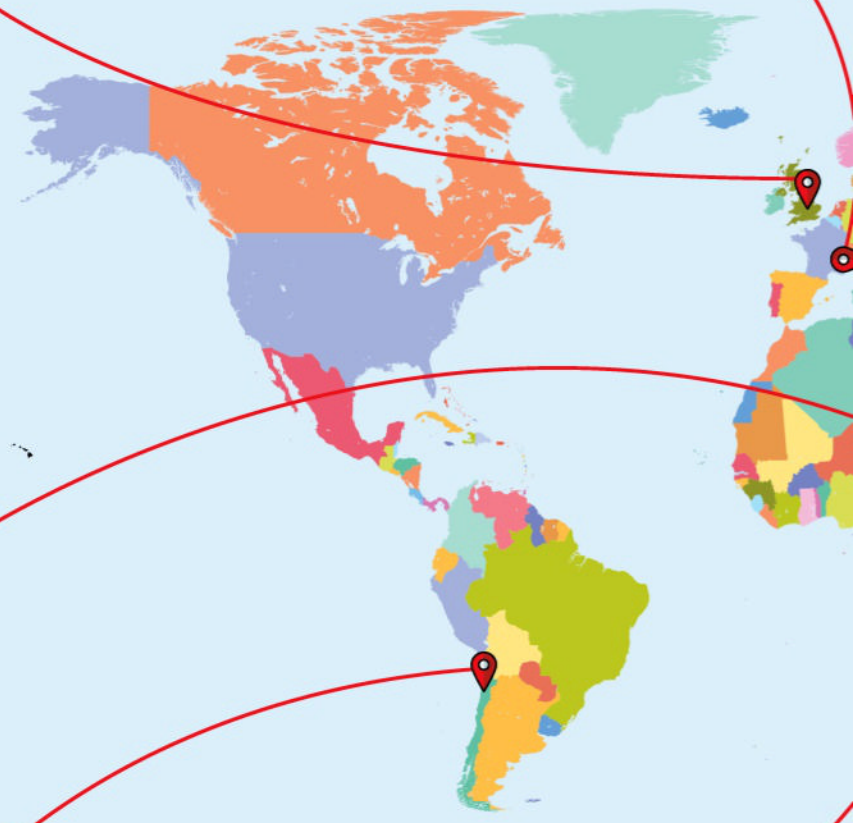
La Serena, Chile
New image of a cosmic butterfly

Astronomers have released a new image of the Butterfly Nebula, a cloud of dust and gas about 3,000 light-years from Earth. A massive star formed the wing-like shape by casting off layers of gas, which glow from its heat. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Gemini Observatory, students in Chile voted for its Gemini South telescope to photograph the nebula.

Venice, Italy
Activists banned from city

Greta Thunberg and 35 other environmental activists were fined and banned from Venice for 48 hours for turning the city's Grand Canal green. The group poured nontoxic dye into the water on November 24 as part of a series of demonstrations against the use of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas, which contribute to climate change.


Greta Thunberg



Slovenia
Bonus for workers

Every worker in Slovenia will receive a Christmas bonus of $740. The new rule requires most employees to be paid the extra money by December 18. The government said it will not charge taxes on the bonus, which equals about two weeks' pay at minimum wage. Slovenian workers also receive a summer bonus in June, and some employers have said they can't afford to pay another one this winter.

A market in Slovenia

AP; GETTY IMAGES (5); JOHAN PERSSON; DIGITAL FREEDOM PROJECT (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

Around the world

Pope Leo XIV

Beirut, Lebanon
Pope makes first trip abroad

Pope Leo XIV, the head of the worldwide Catholic Church, visited Beirut on November 30 as part of his first overseas trip. Thousands of people took to the streets to welcome him, waving flags and tossing flower petals at his vehicle, the popemobile. Airstrikes had hit Lebanon's capital a few days earlier, and the pope called for peace.

Protesters

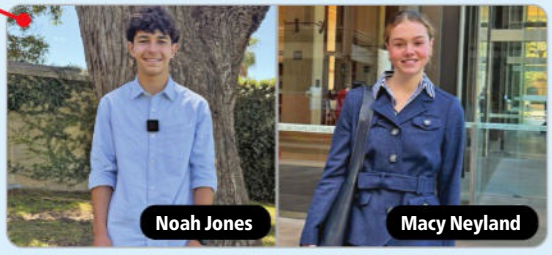
India
Demonstrations against labor laws

Ten unions representing farmers and other workers joined forces to protest India's new labor rules. The government says its updated laws will boost efficiency and protect workers, but labor groups say some of the new rules will increase the power of employers, making it easier for companies to mistreat or fire their employees. Protests took place in several states across India.

A rescue boat

Indonesia
Cyclones hit region

A cyclone (tropical storm) brought strong winds and heavy rain to Indonesia, leading to floods and landslides. Cyclone Senyar destroyed buildings, blocked roads, and caused power outages, and more than 700 people died. The storm went on to affect Malaysia and Thailand while rescue workers struggled to reach hard-hit areas. Another storm, Cyclone Ditwah, made landfall in Sri Lanka, causing 465 deaths and widespread damage.


Noah Jones

Macy Neyland

Australia
Teens battle social media ban in court

Two teenagers are challenging Australia's new law banning kids under age 16 from social media. The law, which will take effect on December 10, aims to protect children from harmful content. However, Noah Jones and Macy Neyland, both age 15 and supported by an advocacy group called the Digital Freedom Project, say it robs them of their right to free communication.

Jiuquan, China
Rescue mission

An uncrewed spacecraft has blasted off to the Chinese space station, Tiangong, to bring home three stranded astronauts. The astronauts arrived at Tiangong on November 1, but another crew left with their spacecraft after its own craft was damaged. On November 25, a rocket took off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center carrying supplies with the Shenzhou 22 capsule, which will fly the astronauts home next year.

The rocket takes off.

Should we stop having classroom pets?

Some people want animals at school, but others think they're better kept at home.

What you need to know

- **Many classrooms include small pets that are cared for by students, who give them food and water and clean their habitat.**
- **The most popular class pets are fish, followed by guinea pigs and hamsters. Other classrooms have rabbits, hedgehogs, bearded dragons, or tarantulas.**
- **Studies show that pets in the classroom can help improve students' social, behavioral, and academic development.**

PET PAIRS In Switzerland and Sweden, it is illegal to own only one guinea pig because the animal would get lonely.

Whether they're furry, scaly, or slinky, pets can be an exciting addition to a classroom. Often, students get to have fun naming the animals before taking on the responsibility of caring for them. Depending on the type of animal, kids sometimes even get to hold the pets—with a teacher's supervision, of course. While class pets can be cute and cuddly, many people are concerned that they're also a distraction for students and an added responsibility for teachers. And organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals have raised concerns about the well-being of animals in schools. What do you think? Should we stop having classroom pets?

Yes—school is for learning

Classroom pets are adorable, but that's exactly the problem. Students will want to play with them all day, rather than paying attention to reading, math, or science. Taking care of class pets requires time and effort, which isn't fair to teachers. Even if kids help, the teacher is ultimately responsible for the animals and making sure someone takes them home during school breaks. Noisy classrooms can also be scary and stressful for pets, which can cause health problems. Students and teachers might not know the best way to care for them, and if the animals need to see a vet, who will pay the bill for that? Overall, it's not a great idea.

No—they're a beneficial bonus

Caring for animals in class teaches students to take care of another living thing and helps them learn responsibility and compassion. Many students don't have pets at home, so this is their only chance to have that experience. Students can also develop strong emotional bonds with class pets, which can positively affect their behavior and motivation in school. And kids who are feeling frustrated or upset can spend time with the animal, which will help them calm down and feel better. Class pets are also great for learning. There are endless ways to incorporate them into math problems, creative writing, or science lessons.

YES Three reasons we should stop having classroom pets

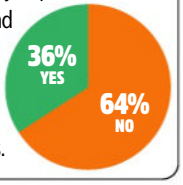
1. **They're so cute and entertaining that they can be a major distraction for students.**
2. **Teachers unfairly wind up doing most of the work to care for a classroom pet, like making sure it has a home over breaks.**
3. **Classrooms are loud and hectic, which isn't a great environment for animals and can pose health risks to them.**

NO Three reasons we should not stop having classroom pets

1. **They help students learn to be responsible, develop compassion, and understand other living things.**
2. **Class pets can be comforting for students and create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.**
3. **Incorporating class pets into lessons can make learning fun and interesting.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if driverless taxis are a good idea. Most of you prefer a person behind the wheel: 64% of you said no, and 36% said yes.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think we should stop having classroom pets or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

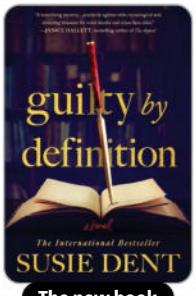
The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

A love of language

Etymologist Susie Dent, who is based in the UK, writes the "Word of the Week" column for *The Week Junior*. Her first novel, a mystery titled *Guilty by Definition*, was recently released in the US and became an instant best-seller. Dent spoke to *The Week Junior* about her career.

When did your interest in words start?
I sometimes think words found me rather than the other way around. Before I could read, I would stare at shampoo bottles, marveling at the exotic-looking letters on their labels.



The new book

What do you love most about words?
They've had the most extraordinary journeys across continents and languages. "Week" comes from German, "bungalow" from Hindi, and "passport" from French. I love tracing their roots and seeing how they have evolved.

How would you describe your job?
Being an etymologist is like being a word detective, always digging for evidence on how words are used and where they come from. I also track new words, including teenage slang. For *The Week Junior*, I really enjoy exploring words in the news.

What inspired your novel?
As a child I won a short story contest, and my parents were so proud. My father always encouraged me to return to fiction, and I'm glad I did. The book let me combine word detection with crime detection.

Do you plan to keep writing fiction?
I'm already working on a second novel and am planning to write a children's book.

Best advice for young writers?
Take a deep breath and give it a go. You'll never regret trying—only not trying at all.

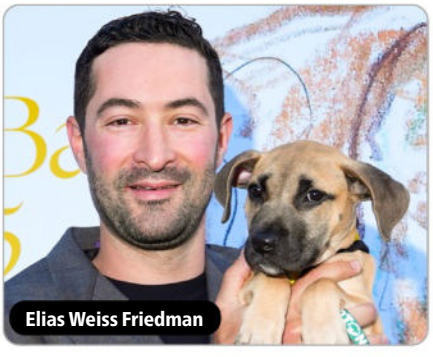
Susie Dent

WOW!
The English language borrows words from more than 300 other languages and is spoken by about 1.5 billion people around the world.

Architect is honored

Mexican architect Mario Schjetnan has won the 2025 Cornelia Hahn Oberlander Prize. It is the most prestigious prize in landscape architecture and is awarded every two years by the Cultural Landscape Foundation. He is being honored for reshaping Mexico's parks and public spaces to improve urban life. With his firm, he built 100,000 affordable homes and designed Chapultepec Forest and Park—Mexico's largest urban park. The foundation praised his commitment to ensuring "the human right to have access to open space."

Mario Schjetnan


Elias Weiss Friedman

Dog artist's next step

Elias Weiss Friedman, known online as "The Dogist," has launched a new YouTube series, *Dogs with Elias*. Friedman, who gained fame for photographing dogs and their owners on the street, has taken pictures of more than 50,000 dogs and has about 10 million social media followers. In his series, he meets prominent people—from musicians and actors to the late Jane Goodall, the renowned conservationist—while exploring New York City with his dogs. Friedman told WNYC radio that his mission is "to be a source of light in the world."

OVERHEARD

"Joy is my strong suit."
Award-winning actress Sheryl Lee Ralph on the philosophy that has carried her throughout her life and career

MICHAEL LECKIE; BOOK: COURTESY OF PUBLISHER; BARRETT DOHERTY/THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION; GETTY IMAGES (2)

FUN NAME
Coral reefs have been called "the rainforests of the sea" because of the wide variety of life they support.

A blackbelly rosefish was seen among corals.

Pink jellies spotted

In a rare sighting, a researcher recently discovered more than 10 "pink meanie" jellyfish on beaches in Texas. These large jellies (below) are called "meanies" because they eat other jellies. Their tentacles can grow 70 feet long. In the ocean, they look like floating blobs of cotton candy.

Creatures discovered in deep sea reefs

Coral reefs are one of Earth's most important ecosystems (groups of plants and animals that affect one another), yet around the world many of these habitats are declining. So scientists from the Schmidt Ocean Institute (SOI) were pleasantly surprised when they recently found reefs off the coast of Uruguay that appear healthy and full of ocean life.

Coral reefs form when animals called corals attach themselves to hard surfaces and then grow and expand. These reefs support about a quarter of the life in the ocean by providing food and shelter. They are at risk of dying out because of rising ocean temperatures and other factors, such as overfishing, pollution, and damage caused by humans and boats.

This coral may be a new species.

To investigate the health of reefs off the coast of Uruguay, scientists from the SOI recently spent 29 days on an ocean expedition. This included sending a remotely operated vehicle called SuBastian deep underwater to collect video footage and record data. The reefs they explored were built by a coral species called Desmophyllum pertusum, which is found throughout the Atlantic Ocean and is considered vulnerable to extinction worldwide.

The SOI expedition, however, found healthy reefs. They even saw one reef complex nearly 1,000 feet below the ocean's surface that had grown larger than 180 full-size soccer fields put together. The tallest coral mound they discovered measured more than 120 feet tall. They also found plenty of ocean animals, such as bellowsfish, groupers, and sharks.

The scientists discovered at least 30 new species of ocean life living in the habitat. This included species of sponges, snails, and crustaceans. They also identified known species that had never been seen before in this part of the ocean, such as crystal squids, tripod fish, and a dumbo octopus.

The information they gathered on this journey could help inform efforts to preserve Uruguay's underwater habitats. "Discovering marine life reveals the hidden depths of the oceans and transforms the way we perceive our world," said Leticia Burone, one of the scientists who took part in the expedition.

PLACE OF THE WEEK

Vatnajökull National Park, Iceland

This national park in southern Iceland covers nearly 14% of the country. It contains Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, as well as 10 volcanoes—two of which are active. This combination of fire and ice has created dramatic landscapes, including glacial lagoons, lava fields, mountains, and waterfalls. In fact, Iceland's highest peak, the 6,900-foot-tall Hvannadalshnúkur, is located in the park. Tall birch forests fill some parts of the park, while others are covered by carpets of moss. Arctic foxes, harbor seals, pink-footed geese, and about 2,000 reindeer live in the area.

An Arctic fox

SNEAKY SIPPERS
In the 1920s, tit birds were known to peck through the foil caps of milk bottles so they could steal a sip.

Great tit songbirds

Birds learn from their siblings

Many people look up to their brothers and sisters. Now researchers have discovered that some birds also look to their siblings as role models—even more than they look up to their parents.

In the wild, small songbirds usually depend on their parents for 10 to 14 days before leaving the nest. After that, birds acquire life skills through direct experience or by observing other feathered friends.

Scientists at the University of California, Davis, and the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior studied 231 great tit songbirds, including 103 juveniles, for 10 weeks. They presented the birds with a puzzle that required sliding a door left or right to reach a tray of mealworms.

After one set of young birds figured out how to get the reward, about 94% of the remaining birds learned to solve the puzzle from their siblings. Less than 2% learned it from their parents, and about 4% followed the lead of other adults. Researchers say these results reveal that siblings are important sources for young birds as they learn the skills they need to survive.

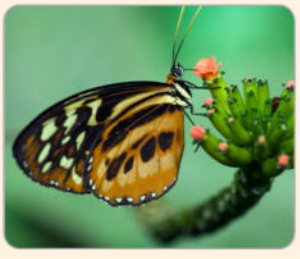
Animal of the week: L'Hoest's monkey

A rare monkey was recently born at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland. L'Hoest's monkeys are native to eastern and central Africa and are classified as vulnerable. The baby was born with orange fur, which will turn black after about three months.

- **LIFESPAN:** 20 to 24 years
- **HABITAT:** Tropical rainforests
- **SIZE:** 12 to 27 inches long and up to a 39-inch tail
- **DIET:** Fruits, flowers, and small insects
- **FUN FACT:** L'Hoest's monkeys use five kinds of alarm calls to signal danger.

Good week / Bad week

Leatherback sea turtles
After efforts were made to rebuild beaches damaged by hurricanes Helene and Milton, leatherback sea turtles have been nesting in Florida in record numbers. A recent count found 2,021 nests, the most ever recorded.



Amazonian butterflies
Researchers say butterflies in the Amazon rainforest are losing color and becoming dull and brown. As people replace colorful native plants with drab crops like eucalyptus and oil palms, butterflies are evolving duller coloring to blend in.

ASK AN EXPERT: "Are fishing cats the only cats with webbed paws?"

Aria, 9, Texas

Tiasa Adhya
Director, The Fishing Cat Project, Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance

Among the 40 members of the cat family, two have partially webbed feet: the fishing cat and the flat-headed cat. This feature helps these cats thrive in wetland ecosystems. Their webbed feet help them catch fish and provide traction while walking in mud.

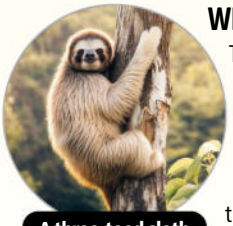
Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance at fishingcat.org.

GETTY IMAGES (4); ALAMY; ON LEFT PAGE: ROV SUBASTIAN/SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE (2); GETTY IMAGES (3)

Masters of survival in

These famously slow creatures have lived on Earth for millions of years.

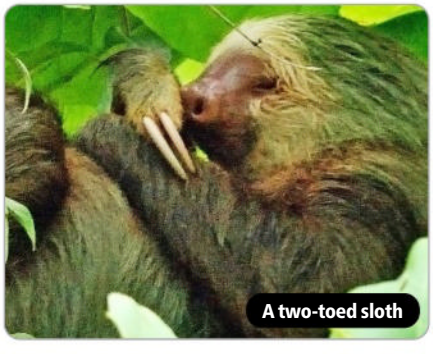
The low-key lifestyle of sloths has been a source of fascination for human researchers. Let's find out more about these rainforest dwellers.



A three-toed sloth

What are sloths?

These mammals are related to anteaters and armadillos. They live in Central and South America, where they spend almost all their time in the treetops of tropical rainforests. Some species hang horizontally from tree branches, while others sit in the forks of trees. Sloths come down from their trees to poop, but since they are highly vulnerable to predators on the ground, they do so only about once a week. The animals are famous for their slow, seemingly lazy lifestyle. In fact, the word "sloth" means "lazy" in many languages, including English.



A two-toed sloth

Two toes or three?

There are two kinds of sloths—two-toed and three-toed, identified by the number of claws (or "toes") on their front limbs. All sloths have three toes on their back feet. Adult three-toed sloths weigh less than 10 pounds, while adult two-toed sloths weigh up to about 17 pounds. There are four three-toed sloth species—the brown-throated sloth, maned sloth, pale-throated sloth, and pygmy three-toed sloth. Of these, the pygmy sloth is critically endangered and the maned sloth is considered vulnerable to extinction. The two species of two-toed sloths are Linnaeus's two-toed sloth and Hoffmann's two-toed sloth.

STRONG SWIMMERS
Sloths move up to three times faster in water than they do on land, using their long arms to paddle.

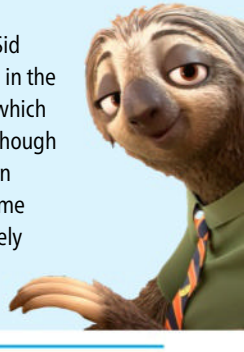
The curved mouth and dark facial markings of the three-toed sloth make it appear as though it's smiling.

Sloths with star power

Given their cute appearance and distinctive traits, sloths often appear on screen. Here are a few films featuring memorable sloths.

Ice Age

Voiced by actor John Leguizamo, Sid (left) is one of the main characters in the *Ice Age* movie franchise, which consists of five films. Although Sid is not strictly based on a particular sloth species, some experts say he most closely resembles the extinct Shasta ground sloth.

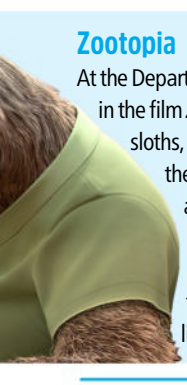


SHUTTERSTOCK (2); GETTY IMAGES (2); ALAMY (3); THE POKÉMON COMPANY INTERNATIONAL

the treetops

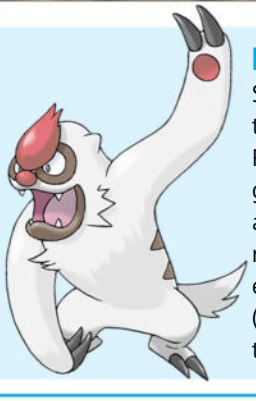
COZY COAT
Different species of algae, fungi, moths, and other insects live in sloths' thick fur.

FUN FACT
Sloths eat, sleep, and give birth to their young while hanging upside down.



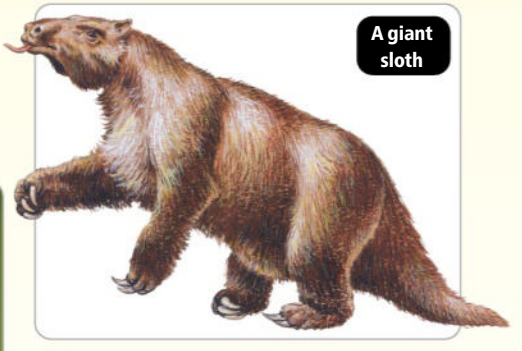
Zootopia

At the Department of Mammal Vehicles in the film *Zootopia*, employees are sloths, a comical reference to the real-world motor vehicle agency's reputation as slow-moving. The "fastest guy in there," Flash (left), takes a long time to type a license plate number.



Pokémon

Slakoth is a sloth-like pokémon that was introduced in the Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire games. It sleeps 20 hours a day, and one of its special abilities is making others drowsy. Slakoth eventually evolves into Vigoroth (left) and, finally, Slaking, who is the world's laziest pokémon.



A giant sloth

Big beginnings

Sloths first appeared on Earth approximately 35 million years ago in what is now South America. Prehistoric sloths came in a wide variety of sizes, from small tree dwellers similar to today's sloths to giant ground sloths, which were as big as Asian bull elephants and weighed approximately 8,000 pounds. One species of ground sloth is named after former US President Thomas Jefferson, who played a role in discovering its fossils. Although scientists are not certain, it is believed that giant ground sloths went extinct about 12,000 years ago. They may have been driven to extinction by prehistoric humans, who hunted them and disrupted their habitat. However, much about the history and evolution (development of an animal or plant over time) of sloths is still unknown.

A sloth asleep

Life in the slow lane

Known for sleeping for long stretches, sloths can snooze for 8 to 10 hours a day in the wild and up to 20 in captivity. Researchers have found many reasons for this slow lifestyle. First, sloths eat a leafy diet that is low in nutrients. They also have large stomachs that digest food slowly. Sloths have poor eyesight, so they must move cautiously. Their inactive ways help to protect them from predators, too, since slow movements are less likely to be detected by other animals. Today, sloths face increased habitat loss from deforestation. Conservationists are finding ways to help, such as by creating "sloth crossings" (rope bridges) for safe passage over roads and fragmented forests.

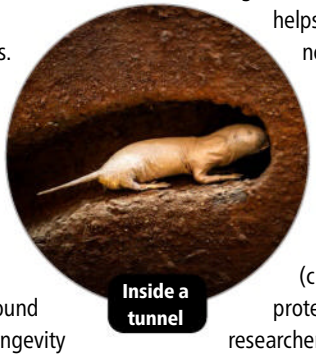
COZY TOGETHER
Naked mole rats have trouble regulating their body temperature, so they huddle together to stay warm.

Despite their name, naked mole rats are not rats or moles. They're most closely related to guinea pigs and porcupines.

Superpowers of naked mole rats

Naked mole rats are small rodents that live up to 40 years, far longer than other similarly sized rodents, and are unusually resistant to cancer and other ailments. A new study uncovered a possible explanation for these "superpowers," as some people call these traits, and the findings could one day improve human health and extend lives.

Native to east Africa, naked mole rats are wrinkly, pink, nearly bald rodents that form colonies and live in underground burrows that can extend for miles. Each mole rat is about 3 inches long and weighs between 1 to 2.5 ounces, with tiny eyes and enormous front teeth. They can survive up to 18 minutes without oxygen.



Inside a tunnel

Scientists from Tongji University in Shanghai, China, found that mole rats' sturdiness and longevity are probably connected to their bodies' ability to repair their DNA (complex chemical that carries instructions for how a living thing should grow and develop).

When strands of DNA are damaged, the body starts to repair them, using an intact strand of DNA as a model. While studying this process in naked mole rats, the scientists focused on cGAS, a protein the body produces when it senses damage. Proteins help the body function and stay alive, in part by sending signals between cells.

In humans, the cGAS protein interferes with and hampers the DNA repair process, which may increase the risk of cancer. But the researchers found that in mole rats, cGAS does the opposite. The protein helps the rodents repair strands of DNA and maintains the proper sequence of genes (short sections of DNA), which helps keep the animals healthy. This not only makes naked mole rats resistant to cancer but also slows down signs of aging, like inflammation and reduced physical function.

Scientists connected this difference to mutations (changes) in parts of the cGAS protein called amino acids. When researchers altered the amino acids in mole rats, the proteins no longer helped with DNA repair. But when the scientists inserted the amino acid mutations into fruit flies, the insects lived nearly 10 days longer than other flies whose amino acids hadn't been changed.

The scientists will continue their research to determine how their findings could improve human health and possibly even extend the quality and length of our lives.

Busy animals

In a colony

Naked mole rats take on specific roles within their colonies, including tunnel diggers, foragers, and toilet cleaners, a new study found. They are one of two mammal species known to be eusocial, which means they demonstrate advanced social organization. Under their system, the queen reproduces while other colony members perform tasks.

Researchers at the University of Tokyo studied five colonies of about 20 mole rats each. They attached microchips to the animals and put detectors in the colonies. The scientists continuously monitored the animals to see where they went and who they spent time with. The breeding animals—the queen and a few males—mostly stayed close to one another, while the workers divided themselves into six groups and took on different tasks.

New insight into a huge crater on the Moon

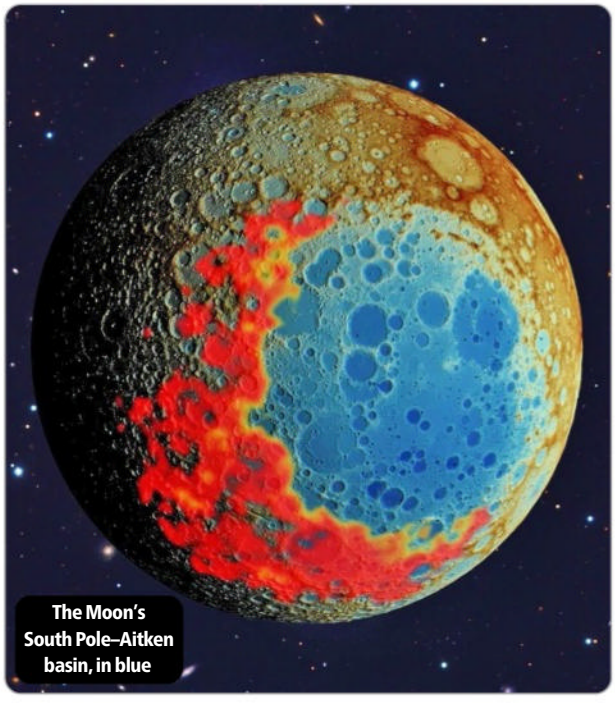
A recent study has upended what scientists thought they knew about a distinctive feature at the Moon's south pole, called the South Pole–Aitken (SPA) basin. The findings could be helpful for NASA's upcoming Artemis III mission, which aims to land astronauts near the lunar south pole.

BIG IMPACT
The Moon most likely formed about 4.5 billion years ago after a planet-like object collided with Earth.

The SPA basin is the largest impact crater on the Moon, spanning about 1,200 miles from north to south and 1,000 miles east to west. It is believed to have formed about 4.3 billion years ago, when a giant asteroid struck the Moon. The powerful impact also released chemicals from below the Moon's surface.

Previously, scientists believed that the asteroid was coming from the south when it hit and carved out the SPA basin. In the new study, however, a team led by Jeffrey Andrews-Hanna of the University of Arizona determined that the SPA is shaped like a teardrop or avocado, getting narrower on its southern end. This indicated that the asteroid was likely coming from the north, heading south, when it hit.

If the study's findings are correct, an abundance of chemicals from beneath the lunar surface would have settled at the southern pole of the Moon. Artemis astronauts are set to land nearby in 2027 and could collect samples of the chemicals for analysis. This could answer questions about the Moon's development, including why its far side is thicker than its smooth near side, which we can see from Earth.



The Moon's South Pole–Aitken basin, in blue

The grass shoe

Medieval shoe found in vulture's nest

Scientists examining bearded vultures' nests in a cave in southern Spain made a surprising discovery: a grass shoe that was woven more than 750 years ago. A bird likely snatched it up and used it to construct its home.

Bearded vultures build their nests in nooks, like cliffside caves, using layers of bone, grass, twigs, and scavenged materials. The cool, dry conditions in the caves protect and preserve the structures. Although the species has been extinct in this part of Spain for more than 70 years, their nests have outlasted them.

More than 200 other artifacts made by humans were also found. These included cloth, string, and a slingshot made of woven grass. A scrap of sheep leather, painted with red stripes, was more than 700 years old, while a fragment of a basket was about 225 years old.

The items offer insight into the species' past and could help researchers figure out the best way to protect the birds in the future.

AMAZING INVENTION

A device that turns air into water

The inventors and their device

Billions of people worldwide lack access to clean drinking water. To address this problem, scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology designed a water-harvesting device that pulls moisture from the air without a power source. The window-size panel has a glass pane and a layer of hydrogel that looks like bubble wrap.

The hydrogel traps water from the air. The water then flows down the glass, through a tube, to be collected. The device was successfully tested in Death Valley, California, one of the driest regions in the US.

JEFF ANDREWS-HANNA/UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA/NASA/NAOJ; ANTONI MARGALIDA; COURTESY OF THE RESEARCHERS; ON LEFT PAGE: ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES (2)

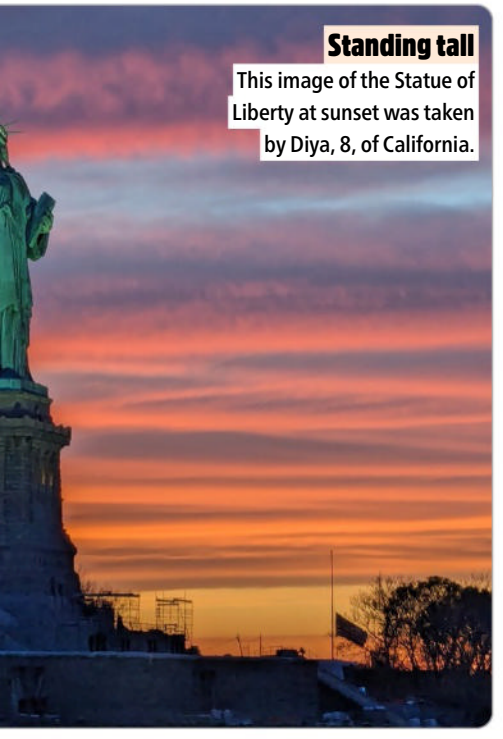
Reader photos of the week

Natural beauty
While in Alaska, Kailea, 12, of Washington, DC, snapped this scenic shot of fireweed.

Bright blooms
Joshua, 12, of Florida took this close-up of flowers.

LILIANA; JOSHUA; DIYA; CHASE; JULIAN; KAILEA

Reader photos of the week



Standing tall
This image of the Statue of Liberty at sunset was taken by Diya, 8, of California.

Vivid view
Liliana, 12, of Rhode Island shot this photo of fall foliage in Maine.

Bugging out
Julian, 10, of New York captured this photo of a green fly on a plant.

On the dot
Chase, 11, of Ohio snapped this image of water droplets on a stem.

LOOKING AHEAD
The 2027 Winter Deaflympics will be held in Innsbruck, Austria.

The US women's soccer team at the Deaflympics

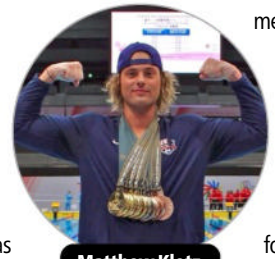
A meaningful emblem

Students from Tsukuba University of Technology, a college in Japan, created the emblem for the 2025 Tokyo Deaflympics (above). Elements include a hand to represent the deaf community and multiple colors to reflect the global diversity of the participants.

US athletes shine at Deaflympics

From November 15 to November 26, the 2025 Summer Deaflympics were held in Tokyo, Japan. The event is an international sporting competition for athletes with significant hearing loss. This year's competition featured 2,911 athletes from 79 countries. None of them are able to hear a conversation at a typical volume in their better ear without a hearing aid or other device.

The Deaflympics originated as the International Silent Games. It was the first global sporting event specifically for athletes with disabilities. The first Silent Games was held in 1924 in Paris, France, and had athletes from nine European nations. Like the Olympics, the Deaflympics has Summer and Winter Games.


Matthew Klotz

There were 21 sports at this year's competition. At the end of the games, Ukraine led all nations with 99 medals, including 32 golds. The US earned the second-most golds, 17, and won 36 medals overall, the fourth-most. Team USA athletes medaled in cycling, mountain biking, golf, tennis, swimming, track and field, judo, basketball, and soccer.

On November 17, cyclist Jayson Wallace won the first medal for the US, a gold in the men's sprint event. The same day, Nina Cutro-Kelly won a gold in women's judo. In track and field two days later, Jarvis Anderson won the men's triple jump and a silver in the 110-meter hurdles. He earned four medals in all.

Over six days of swimming, US athletes won multiple golds and set Deaflympic records and world records. One of the American women who was a star in the pool was Carli Cronk. She raced in individual and relay events and won nine medals, including seven golds. Two US standouts on the men's side were Marcus Titus and Matthew Klotz. They each won two individual golds and were on three relay teams that won gold. Klotz is now the most decorated deaf athlete in the US.

On November 25, Team USA won the gold in men's basketball and the silver in women's basketball, plus a gold in women's soccer. It was the soccer team's fifth straight Deaflympics championship, which is a record. The US men's soccer team finished in fourth place, the best result in program history.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

BASKETBALL

On November 29 in the NBA, the Dallas Mavericks beat the Los Angeles Clippers, 114–110. Mavs rookie Cooper Flagg, age 19, scored 35 points. He is now the youngest player ever to rack up that many points or more in an NBA game. The next day, the Oklahoma City Thunder, who are the league's defending champions, defeated the Portland Trail Blazers, 123–115, for their 12th consecutive victory.

Cooper Flagg (center)

FOOTBALL

In the NFL on November 28, the Chicago Bears beat the Philadelphia Eagles, 24–15. The Bears are now guaranteed to have more wins than losses for the first time since the 2018 season.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

The University of Nebraska finished the regular season with a 30–0 record after beating Ohio State University, 3–0, on November 29. This year, Nebraska lost only seven sets in all their matches combined.

DID YOU KNOW?
The oldest college football rivalry is between Lehigh University and Lafayette College, dating back to 1884.

Ohio State vs. Michigan

Rivalry Week in college football

The college football regular season ended on November 29. It was marked by Rivalry Week, an exciting tradition that features many teams across the US facing their biggest foes.

The most anticipated matchup was between Big Ten conference rivals Ohio State University, the number one team and reigning national champions, and the 15th-ranked University of Michigan. Ohio State came into the November 29 contest with a 12–0 record and hopes of finally beating Michigan after four years of losses in what is known as "The Game." Although Ohio State got off to a slow start, they eventually ended Michigan's streak with a 27–9 victory.

In a major Southeastern Conference (SEC) showdown the night before, 16th-ranked University of Texas made a big second-half comeback to beat third-ranked Texas A&M, 27–17. It was Texas A&M's first loss this season. As a result of the defeat and other teams' wins, they lost their chance to play for the SEC championship. The same day, 25th-ranked University of Arizona beat 20th-ranked Arizona State University, 23–7, while fourth-ranked University of Georgia beat 23rd-ranked Georgia Tech, 16–9.

In SEC games on November 29, 10th-ranked University of Alabama defeated unranked Auburn University, 27–20. Alabama led 17–0 in the second quarter, but Auburn stormed back. A late Auburn fumble let Alabama escape with the win. Meanwhile, 14th-ranked Vanderbilt University beat 19th-ranked University of Tennessee, 45–24.

Alabama was set to play Georgia for this season's SEC championship title on December 6.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Waylissa Night**

Sport: **Cheerleading**

"Coach Way is an amazing coach and cheerleader. I've had her for three years, and they've all been incredible. She pushes us to do more than we think is possible for ourselves. I've been thrown in the air and carried people while they 'fly.' She encourages us to compete and helps us be the best we can be. If we are not doing our best, she pushes us to be better. She's also there for us when we're sad or hurt, and she lets everyone be themselves." Veronica, 11, New York

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

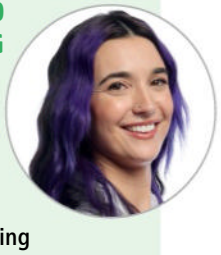
SPOTLIGHT ON...

These US athletes are hoping to qualify for the upcoming Winter Olympics or Paralympics in Italy. Here is some sports-related advice they shared with The Week Junior.

Paula Moltzan AGE: 31
SPORT: ALPINE SKIING
"Have fun. If you don't have fun, it's not worth it. Pick a sport that brings you joy, and find your community inside it."

Chloe Levins AGE: 27
SPORT: BIATHLON
"My best advice for kids is to do as many sports as you can for as long as possible. I think versatility is key. In college, I continued to play golf alongside the start of my biathlon career. I think it's been a huge performance advantage."

Jack Wallace AGE: 27
SPORT: SLED HOCKEY
"To achieve whatever dreams or goals you have in life, you have to put in time and work. You're going to get out as much as you put in."



Brenna Huckaby AGE: 29
SPORT: PARA SNOWBOARDING
"Things are going to happen that are going to be hard and challenging. What you'll learn as you keep going is that every time you encounter something hard, you will get stronger and it will get easier to rise to those challenges."

Alysa Liu AGE: 20
SPORT: FIGURE SKATING
"When it comes to pursuing any passion, it's important to still have space and room to explore other things at the same time. Give your all, but also split your time for your own good."

GETTY IMAGES (6); ON LEFT PAGE: JOY MARSHALL/U.S. SOCCER; @MATT__KZ/IG; ICSD; GETTY IMAGES

POPULAR PREVIEW
Percy Jackson and the Olympians' season two trailer racked up 135.9 million views within 10 days of its release.

Percy Jackson and the Olympians

Percy Jackson returns to TV

The time has come for the long-awaited second season of the popular fantasy series based on Rick Riordan's books.

Two years after *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*—the TV adaptation of Rick Riordan's best-selling books—made its debut, the series is returning for a second season. The first two episodes premiere on December 10 on Disney+ and Hulu, and new episodes arrive weekly on Wednesdays.

Riordan's stories are set in modern times but rooted in Greek mythology. As fans know, they revolve around teen demigod (half-god and half-human) Percy and his friends from Camp Half-Blood. The author told *The Week Junior* he thinks one reason *Percy Jackson* has been so popular is because it's about friendship and wish fulfillment. "Which of us has not wanted to believe that maybe our real parent was a god?" he said.

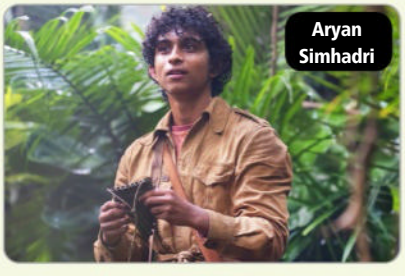
Rick Riordan

In season one, Percy and fellow campers Annabeth, a demigod, and Grover, a satyr (human-goat hybrid), went on a mission to recover a lightning bolt that was stolen from Zeus, the king of the gods. They eventually discovered that another camper stole it as part of a plan to challenge the gods. The new season of the show, based on the second *Percy* book, *The Sea of Monsters,* picks up one year later. This time, Grover goes missing, Camp Half-Blood is threatened, and Percy and his friends battle the Titan Kronos. Characters who play a part in the on-screen action include Percy's Cyclops half-brother, Tyson; fierce demigod Thalia Grace; and Tantalus, the scheming new camp director.

In the book *The Sea of Monsters*, the action unfolded from Percy's perspective. The TV version will have a big difference. "We're telling the same story, but we're telling it from multiple points of view," Riordan said. Flashback scenes, meanwhile, will explore moments featuring Annabeth, Thalia, and fellow demigod Luke. Riordan said he is excited for fans to see some of the book's biggest moments come to life, including an epic sea battle with the monsters Scylla and Charybdis.

Viewers of the first season may notice that the cast's young actors have grown up since they filmed season one. Riordan said it's a good thing. "They are bringing a new kind of confidence and maturity as they grow into these characters and really make them their own, which has been really gratifying to see," he said.

New podcast about the show

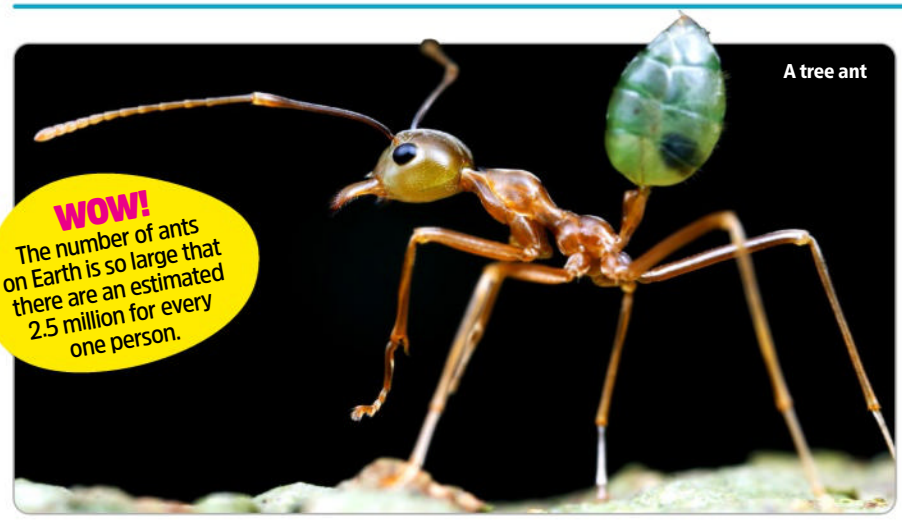


Aryan Simhadri

As a bonus for fans, Disney+ is releasing a *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* podcast to go along with the show's second season. Hosted by Aryan Simhadri (Grover), it provides an unscripted look behind the scenes of the series.

Each week, a new podcast will be released at the same time as a new episode and will focus on that. Listeners can expect interviews with special guests, including Rick Riordan. The podcast will be available on major podcast platforms, and the video recording will be on Disney+, Hulu, and YouTube.

Riordan has recorded his episodes already. He said it was fun to be on the show and that he and Simhadria had "really fantastic conversations, some good laughs, and a fair amount of silliness."



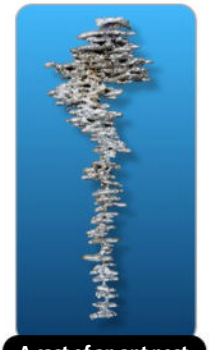
A tree ant

WOW! The number of ants on Earth is so large that there are an estimated 2.5 million for every one person.

Museum exhibit about ant life

A new exhibition at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, is shining a spotlight on some of the world's most impressive and important insects. *Ants: Tiny Creatures, Big Lives* looks at different species' special traits and behaviors, the architecture of their nests, and what they smell like.

There are up to an estimated 20,000 different ant species in the world, and Daniel Ksepka, the museum's curator of science, told *The Week Junior*, "They're remarkable for so many reasons." For example, they help clean up nature and bring air and organic matter into soil. One thing Ksepka especially loves is that they are eusocial, which means they are part of an organized society with defined roles. "Most ants work for the collective good," he said.



A cast of an ant nest

The exhibition is filled with models of ants, including one that is about 5 feet long. The models allow visitors to "see all the details of their anatomy," Ksepka said. Also on display are casts of ant nests, which show their multi-level, multi-chamber structures. They were made by ant biologist Walter Tschinkel using molten aluminum.

Another part of the exhibition focuses on the ways ants use chemical scents to create paths for one another, identify themselves, or signal danger. Visitors can sniff tubes with simulated ant smells, including one that is lemony and one that smells like blue cheese.

A big goal of the exhibition is for visitors to leave understanding the importance of ants in nature. "I hope people think of them not as a pest but as something that really kind of makes the world work," Ksepka said.

READER RECOMMENDS

The Wild Robot *PG (Netflix or rent on other platforms)*

"This movie, based on the book by Peter Brown, is about a robot, Roz, who gets stranded on an island. She finds a goose egg and cares for it. When it hatches, she names the gosling Brightbill and raises him. At first, the animals on the island are scared of Roz, but they slowly come to like her and start treating her like one of their own. After the robot factory that Roz came from picks up her signal, they send robots to take her back, but the animals fight to keep her. The story has many heartfelt and funny moments. I think it is a great movie." Violet, 10, Massachusetts

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST

Lego Marvel Avengers: Strange Tails (Disney+)

In the latest Lego special with minifigure Avengers, Hawkeye and the other heroes take on a social media influencer. When she unleashes mind-controlled cats, the Avengers must team up with the Catvengers—Tigra, Black Cat, and White Tiger—to save the day.

Next Level Baker: Holidays (Hulu) (Fox) Thursdays at 9 p.m. ET

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay hosts this holiday spin-off of his competition series *Next Level Chef*. As professional, home, and social media bakers create festive treats, they try to avoid being demoted to the show's bottom-level kitchen where the cooking conditions are tougher.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw (Disney+)

This film is based on the third book in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. It follows Greg Heffley as he struggles to meet his dad's high expectations. After a series of mishaps, Greg's dad insists they go on a father-son camping trip, where Greg is required to be on his best behavior.

ALEX WILD; WALTER R. TSCHINKEL; DREAMWORKS; LEGO/MARVEL; GAVIN BOND/FOX; DISNEY; ON LEFT PAGE: DISNEY/DAVID BUKACH (2); GETTY IMAGES

LITTLE LIZARD
The smallest reptile on Earth is believed to be the nano chameleon, which is less than an inch long from head to tail.

Yooka-Replaylee

Redesign of a fun adventure

Yooka-Replaylee is a new 3D platform game. It is available for the Nintendo Switch, PlayStation systems, Xbox platforms, and PC.

This game is a redesign of Yooka-Laylee, which came out in 2017. The title combines the name of the two main characters, Yooka (a chameleon) and Laylee (a bat who rides on Yooka's head). The pair are treasure hunters who live in a sunken ship they've turned into a house.

During a treasure hunt, Yooka and Laylee find a magical book called the One Book and bring it back to their home. The game's villain, Capital B, is a greedy bee who wants the book and its powers. An evil scientist, Dr. Quack, helps him retrieve it by vacuuming all the books in the world into Capital B's headquarters, Hivory Tower.

Yooka and Laylee

Yooka and Laylee set out to recover the One Book. Along the way, they have to collect Pagies, which are pages of the book that escaped before the book was sucked away. There are 300 Pagies spread across the game's five levels, which include environments such as a glacier, a marsh, and outer space. Finding Pagies is required to advance in the game, but there is a map to help you figure out where to go. Each world has special moves and transformations, allowing Yooka and Laylee to do things such as turn into flowers or swim like piranhas.

Yooka-Replaylee has fun minigames, including one starring a dinosaur named Rextro. It has many customization options, too, so you can dress Yooka and Laylee in different outfits and also decide how difficult or goofy the action will be.

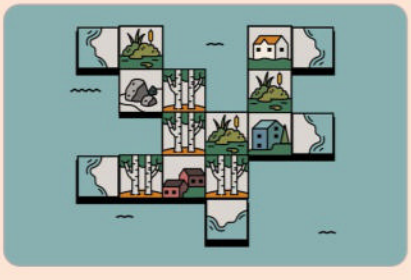
PODCAST OF THE WEEK

SHORT & CURLY

Multiple podcast platforms

This Australian show explores big moral and philosophical questions in a way that is fun and easy to understand. Topics discussed on recent episodes include whether there should be a test to become a parent, whether thoughts matter as much as actions, and if graffiti counts as art.

GAME OF THE WEEK



ECO POWER TOWNS

Apple App Store, Google Play

In this strategy puzzle game, you help a town run on clean energy. The objective is to power all the homes by using solar panels, windmills, and tidal generators. You can upgrade, research, and design your layout to help you reach specific energy goals.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK

THE COLLECTION KING

tinyurl.com/TWJUS-Collection

Salacnib "Sonny" Molina is a famous collector in Illinois who has set six Guinness World Records thanks to all the objects he owns. In this video, he shows off items in his collections, such as mini skateboards, finger puppets, and leather postcards. He also shares stories about them.

PLAYTONIC FRIENDS (2); ABC LISTEN; TEPES OVIDIU; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS VIA YOUTUBE

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Ms. Pennypickle's Puzzle Quest

By Chris Grabenstein

(Random House Books for Young Readers)

Benjamin, a 12-year-old puzzle enthusiast who is self-conscious about his weight, would love to be as cool as his college-bound, athletic brother, Ethan. When their parents see the distance growing between them, they give Ethan a pickup truck for high school graduation on the condition that he take Benjamin on a road trip to Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. At the journey's start, Benjamin and Ethan have no idea about the incredible detours ahead of them. When they stop for breakfast at a pancake house, the mysterious game-maker Ms. Pennypickle recruits them as competitors in a thrilling race that could win them $1 million. The brothers will have to put aside their differences and rely on Benjamin's brainpower to be the first to solve challenges at all the different destinations along the legendary Route 66. Will they win? This wildly amusing story, which may remind you of the TV show *The Amazing Race*, has a twisty ending that will undoubtedly take you by surprise. As you try to solve the riddles with the brothers, you'll pick up fun facts about real-life places. For example, the world's biggest ketchup bottle is located in Illinois. *Ages 8–12*

ASK THE AUTHOR

Chris Grabenstein

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

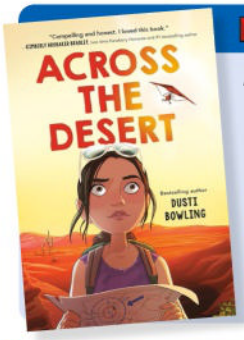
What inspired this book?
I knew readers loved my *Mr. Lemoncello's Library* series, so I wanted to create a new puzzle mystery series. And when I was about 14 or 15, my older brothers took me on a road trip to the Grand Canyon.

Did you enjoy puzzles growing up?
Yes—my mom was an expert at jigsaw puzzles, so we often had a puzzle out. I also liked board games.

Is any character like you?
Like Benjamin, I was a chubby kid and I was always trying to be funny.

What message does the book send?
We all have talents that can help each other. Together, we can make a mosaic that we couldn't as individual puzzle pieces.

How do you spend your free time?
We recently adopted a dog, and I love taking her on walks.



READER RECOMMENDS

Across the Desert *By Dusti Bowling*

"This story is about a girl named Jolene who loves watching a livestream of a girl flying her ultralight aircraft to explore the desert. One day, while Jolene is watching the livestream, the aircraft crashes. Nobody believes Jolene when she tells them what she saw, so she decides to go into the desert herself to find and save the girl. Anyone who loves adventure should read this book." Chloe, 10, Massachusetts

Do you have a book to recommend? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

4 books to put you in the holiday spirit

From fun facts to classic tales, these titles are full of anticipation for the season.

An Anthology of Christmas

By Auriol Bishop

(DK Children)

This keepsake book features beautiful photographs and fun facts related to Christmas. Find out why the traditional tree is usually a pine, spruce, or fir, the origin of holiday wreaths, and more. The foil on the cover makes it feel special. *Ages 7 and up*

The Essential Christmas Classics Collection

By various authors

(Aladdin)

This three-book set contains a mix of famous tales, such as *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* and *The Nutcracker*, as well as lesser-known works. One holiday story is by famous novelist Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), author of *Little Women*. *Ages 8 and up*

The Festival of Lights

Edited by Henry Herz

(Albert Whitman & Company)

The 16 engaging stories and poems by Jewish authors in this book showcase the magic of Hanukkah. In one story that might make your mouth water, a young baker tries to make marzipan sugarplum sufganiyot (doughnuts) by following his great-great-grandfather's recipe. *Ages 8 and up*

The Rise of Nicholas the Noble

By Chanda A. Bell, illustrated by Michael Austin

(HarperPop)

When a young Nicholas and his dog are shipwrecked in the Arctic Tundra, they stumble upon One True North, home to gnomes, fairies, and elves. A greedy army wants to snatch One True North's stone that spreads cheer. Can Nicholas help protect the stone? *Ages 8–12*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: ELENA SEIBERT; GETTY IMAGES

FUN FACT
Americans eat more than 2 billion cookies a year—about 300 cookies per person.

Host a holiday sweets swap

Get into the spirit of the season by exchanging treats at this fun event.

During the holiday season, many people enjoy hosting or attending a party called a cookie swap or cookie exchange. Everyone brings a batch of cookies to trade and goes home with sweets to enjoy. Here's how you can plan one of these fun events.

Create the guest list

Decide who your guests will be and ask an adult to help you invite them to the party. You could draw an invitation that explains how the party works and take a photo of it to send to everyone. On the invitation, you'll want to include how many cookies each person should bring. For example, if you're inviting 12 guests, you might ask each individual to bring 24 cookies. This way, each person can take home two cookies that other people made. Ask everyone to bring an empty cookie tin, box, or platter so they have something to carry their new treats home in.

Bake a big batch!

Set up your space

A kitchen or dining room table is the perfect place to set up for your party. Ask an adult for help putting down a tablecloth and possibly also making a festive centerpiece using holiday plants or decorations you have at home. Then take small pieces of paper and fold them in half. Put them out with some pens. (These will be used to identify the cookies.) On another nearby table, set out savory snacks like cheese and crackers or vegetables with dip, since there will be so many desserts. Put out beverages and cups, too, so guests can help themselves.

Let the swapping begin

When your guests arrive, have them place their cookies on the table. Ask them to write their name and type of cookie on the paper you supplied. It's also a good idea to ask them to note any important information about their treats, like if they contain nut products or are gluten-free. Once the table is full, have guests go around and fill their tins with cookies. Encourage them to chat about the cookies and ask questions.

Share the recipes

In addition to cookies, some guests like to go home with the recipe for each treat. You could ask guests to share their recipes ahead of time. Compile them into one document, then give a copy to each guest!

More ways to share

Baked goods aren't the only items to trade! Here are more ideas for holiday swaps.

Crafts For a crafts swap, you and guests can decide to exchange crafts you've made, such as holiday decorations, or share supplies you don't need.

Board games You may have games or puzzles at home that you no longer use, and your friends likely do, too. Gift each other "new" ones at a swap!

Books Once you've finished a book, someone else may enjoy it. Gather your friends for a book exchange so you can all discover new authors and series.

WOW! The world's largest cookie, measuring 8,120 square feet and weighing 40,000 pounds, was made in North Carolina in 2003.

WARNING! Ask an adult's permission before using a mixer or oven.

Bake and decorate festive sugar cookies

Ingredients

- 2⅓ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¾ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Icing, sprinkles, nonpareils, or other cookie decorations of your choice

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and set on medium speed, beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla and beat to incorporate them. Reduce the mixer's speed to low and blend in the flour mixture one third at a time.

2. Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and knead a few times. Divide the dough in half, then roll each portion into a ball and flatten into a disk. Wrap each in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour.

3. Heat the oven to 350° F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Place one dough portion between two sheets of parchment, then use a rolling pin to roll it out to about ¼ inch thick.

4. Use cookie cutters to cut the dough into shapes. Lay the cookies on a prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 2 inches apart. Gather and re-roll the dough as needed, then repeat the rolling and shaping with remaining dough. Chill the unbaked cookies in the refrigerator for 10 minutes.

5. Bake the cookies until light golden on the bottom, about 12 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack to cool completely. Once they are cooled, decorate as desired. Makes about 30 cookies, 3 inches each in size.

GIFT HACK GIVE A PRESENT OF HOMEMADE TREATS

One way to make friends, relatives, teachers, or neighbors feel extra special during the holidays is with a delicious gift made by you. As you are baking cookies and other treats, you can plan to make extras and set them aside as gifts. After you make the cookies and they are completely cool, sort them into tins, which can be enjoyed and used again by the recipient. Or wrap a few cookies in a new kitchen towel and tie it with a ribbon. Be sure to attach a card so they know it's from you! You might write a simple message like, "Wishing you a sweet holiday season!" You could also decide to share a gift of holiday cookies with a local food pantry.

JOY HOWARD; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Keyword crossword

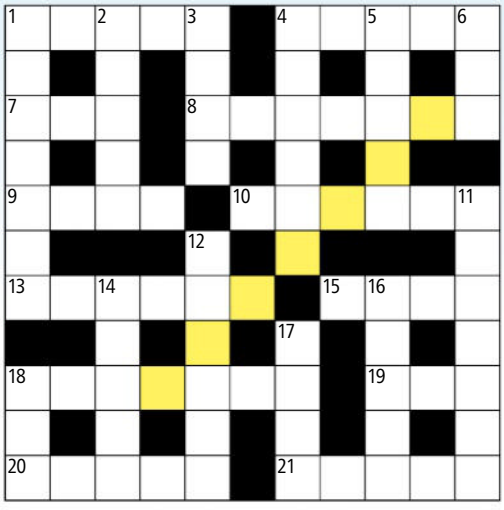
Once you have completed the crossword, transfer the letters in the yellow boxes, diagonally from top right to bottom left, into the boxes below to get the answer to the Keyword question.

ACROSS

1 Gathering of a large number of people
4 The drier you get, the wetter this becomes
7 Color that indicates "stop" or "don't"
8 Decision of "guilty" or "not guilty"
9 AirPods may be found in them
10 Open field with tall grasses
13 Artwork drawn permanently on skin
15 Once in a ___ moon (rarely)
18 Result of violating a sport's rules
19 It's swung at home plate
20 Color that Kermit sings about being
21 Animal an equestrian rides

DOWN

1 ___ events (things happening now)
2 Tell the waiter what you want to eat
3 Enter the pool gracefully
4 Animal representing Thanksgiving
5 Strange or peculiar
6 Word that can follow parking or vacant
11 Grapple to get your opponent down to the mat
12 Flower grains that may trigger an allergic reaction
14 Feeling nervous and unable to relax
16 Strenuous, difficult work
17 The story of Pandora's box, for example
18 "SOME ___!" (message spun in Charlotte's web)



Keyword question: What company called one of its top employees "the best in the world" at his job when he retired after 37 years, despite the fact that he was partially colorblind?

CODE CRACKER

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

In this coded list of things that shine in the dark, every letter has been replaced with a substitute. The same substitutions are used throughout the list. Hint: Every X here is an uncoded F. Use the letter patterns you find to crack the code. (NEED ANOTHER HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

F _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
X H N P V H M Z V B

F _ _ _ F _ _ _ _
X M K L X H M L P

_ _ _ _ _
P B N K P

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Q L Y Q P M Z Q

THREE FOR ALL

Sort this list into three familiar three-part phrases, like THREE-RING CIRCUS or SALT LAKE CITY.

EASY FOR TALE OFF GOING
ENDING START BROKE FAIRY

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Cutting room

Divide this grid into five sections so each section consists of five adjacent boxes containing the numbers 1–5. The sections may have different shapes.

4	5	4	3	3
2	2	1	5	1
1	3	4	2	3
4	5	2	1	5
2	1	3	5	4

Spot the difference

These two illustrations from a 1916 book of nursery rhymes appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Code cracker hint: Every H here is an uncoded L.

Sweet twist on cheesy chips

A festive but controversial new snack flavor is here for the holiday season. The limited-edition Gingerbread Doritos, released only in the UK, merges the worlds of sweet and savory with a tortilla chip crunch. One reviewer on social media said the chips remind them of cinnamon toast, while another said they're giving "sweet and salty popcorn vibes." Others were less enthused, saying "Ew" and "Chuck these in the trash." There's no word yet on whether they can be used to build gingerbread houses.

Skating dog goes for glory

A dog with one eye is trying to paw his way into the record books. Giotto, an Australian bulldog, has been skateboarding since he was a puppy. Now, with more than 70,000 followers on social media, he's rolling toward breaking two world records: the fastest 100 meters on a skateboard and the longest human tunnel skated through by a dog. Giotto recently had an eye removed due to a disease, but his owners say he still skates just as well "if not better." They added, "We think he's the best skating dog in the world."

Pair rows across the Pacific Ocean

Two women have made history by crossing the world's largest ocean in a rowboat. Jess Rowe and Miriam Payne spent 165 days rowing 7,948 miles nonstop from Peru to Australia. During the day they rowed together, and at night they slept in shifts. Along the way, they saw whales in the ocean and meteor showers overhead. But their radio and lights lost power, and they had to fix a broken water filter with spare underwear. "But we kept going," said Payne. "We had such a good time together," said Rowe.

Nacho average marathon

A recent race in Washington, DC, tested runners' stomachs as well as their legs. The Taco Bell 50K challenged participants to run a 31-mile route and eat a menu item from every Taco Bell location they passed. (Drinks didn't count toward the requirement of nine fast-food feasts.) All the running and tacos had to be finished within 11 hours, and vomiting after one too many Crunchwrap Supremes was "discouraged." Organizers called the race "the ultimate mix of endurance and spice." Is this real, or is it wrapped up in lies?*

*Real! The Taco Bell 50K on November 29 was inspired by a similar event in Denver, Colorado. According to organizers, those who completed the ordeal earned a "commemorative item" and "eternal glory (and maybe heartburn)."

PEPSICO UK; TIM HUNTER; GETTY IMAGES (2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

Editor's note

For anyone who isn't sure what "Wondrous Wordsmith" in the top right corner of our front cover means, it's a reference to Susie Dent, who is profiled in this week's People section (p9). Susie, an etymologist based in the UK, is so knowledgeable about words, in fact, that she has been called "the human dictionary"! She also refers to herself as a "word detective." She is a best-selling author and a famous face on a TV game show, and we are also honored that she writes our Word of the Week column in *The Week Junior* (p4). Every week, she takes a look at our lineup of articles and chooses a word that appears in one of them, then explains the origin of that word in her column. I always learn something about language when I read what she writes! Our entire team is grateful to Susie for sharing her expertise with us and our readers. Thank you so much, Susie!

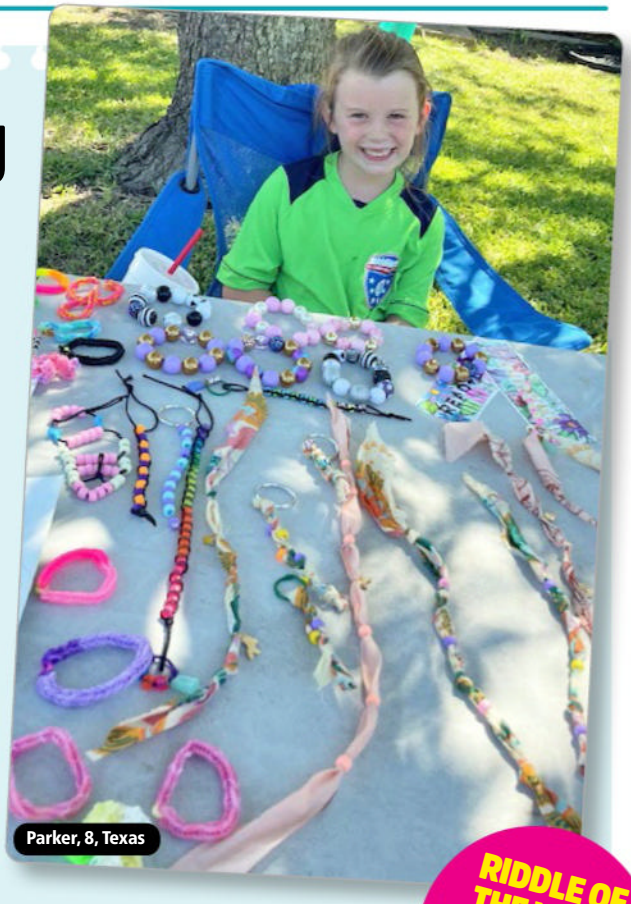
Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Center for Biological Diversity

This organization's mission is to protect endangered species and reduce threats to biodiversity. It funds wildlife research and petitions to achieve legal protections for animals, plants, and their habitats. The group is currently working to establish stronger legal protections for vaquitas and gray wolves. Find out more at biologicaldiversity.org.

Donating to a hospital



Parker, 8, Texas

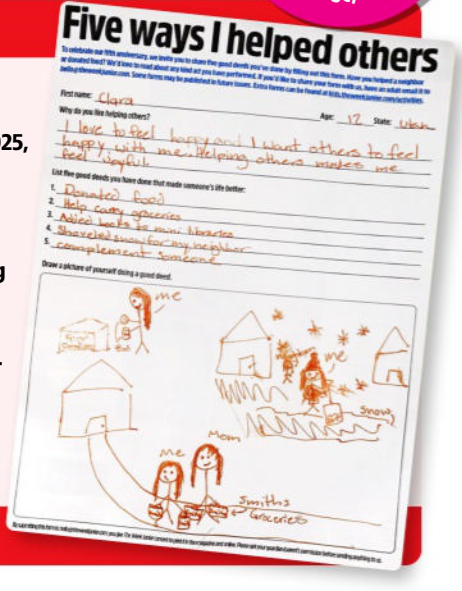
"I was inspired to do my fundraiser after reading about two girls in Colorado who raised money for flood relief. I wanted to do something that would help people who couldn't help themselves. The reason I picked St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is because it operates on donations. It provides care to kids whose families can't afford hospital fees. I raised more than $300 for St. Jude. Even though hospital fees are thousands of dollars, this will help."

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK
What has a top and a bottom but no middle?
A bagel

Your five good deeds

To celebrate *The Week Junior*'s fifth anniversary in 2025, we called on readers to tell us about five good deeds they've done. Clara, a 12-year-old from Utah, sent us the form shown at right. Her good deeds include donating food, helping to carry groceries, and adding books to mini libraries. We've enjoyed reading every form we have received this year. Thank you for sending them to us! If you have helped a neighbor or performed a kind act and want to write about it, you can fill out the form as a keepsake. Go to kids.theweekjunior.com/activities to download it.


Five ways I helped others

First name: Clara Age: 12 State: Utah

Why do you like helping others?
I love to feel happy and I want others to feel happy with me. Helping others makes me feel joyful.

List five good deeds you have done that made someone's life better:
1. Donated food
2. Help carry groceries
3. Added books to mini libraries
4. Shoveled snow for my neighbor
5. Compliment someone

Draw a picture of yourself doing a good deed.

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

"I always love doing the puzzles in *The Week Junior*! They make my day!" Layla, 9, Illinois

"We tried a recipe in *The Week Junior*, and the breakfast quesadilla was egg-cellent!" Keshav, 7, California

"After reading *The Week Junior*, my family and I went chasing fall colors. It was such an amazing experience!" Maya, 8, Texas

Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Mrs. Denning**

School: **Willowbrook Elementary**

"Mrs. Denning is the best teacher ever! Even though we might get a little talkative, she is always patient with us. Mrs. Denning makes lessons fun in many different ways. For example, she once wore a queen's crown while we were learning about the Middle Ages. There is so much more to say about how great she is!"

Molly, 9, Iowa

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: USPWS

Puzzle answers (from page 26)

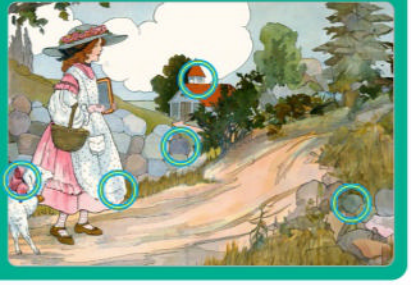
C	R	O	W	D		T	O	W	E	L		
U		R		I		U		E		O		
R	E	D		V	E	R	D	I	C	T		
R		E		E		K		R				
E	A	R	S		M	E	A	D	O	W		
N				P		Y				R		
T	A	T	T	O	O		B	L	U	E		
		E		L		M		A		S		
P	E	N	A	L	T	Y		B	A	T		
I		S		E		T		O		L		
G	R	E	E	N		H	O	R	S	E		

Keyword answer: Crayola

Code cracker
flashlight
fireflies
stars
neon sign

Three for all
going for broke
start off easy
fairy tale ending

4	5	4	3	3
2	2	1	5	1
1	3	4	2	3
4	5	2	1	5
2	1	3	5	4



Quiz answers (from page 30) **1** True **2** a) Uruguay **3** Capital B **4** b) 1928 **5** False. Nearly all the songbirds learned from their siblings. **6** *Ants: Tiny Creatures, Big Lives* **7** b) Mexico **8** True **9** Ohio State University **10** True **11** c) Tyson **12** False. It is shaped like a teardrop or avocado. **13** c) Ukraine **14** a) Grand Canyon **15** Gingerbread

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 True or false? *Zootopia 2* set a record for the highest international box office opening by an animated movie.

True ☐ False ☐

2 A recent expedition discovered ocean life in coral reefs off the coast of which country?

a) Uruguay

b) Guyana

c) Nicaragua

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

3 Who is the villain of the video game Yooka-Replaylee?

4 The Olympic torch was first used in the modern Games in what year?

a) 1896 b) 1928 c) 1964

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

5 True or false? In a recent study, nearly all young songbirds learned to solve a puzzle from their parents.

True ☐ False ☐

6 What is the title of the new exhibit dedicated to ants at the Bruce Museum?

7 Architect Mario Schjetnan built which country's largest urban park?

a) Brazil

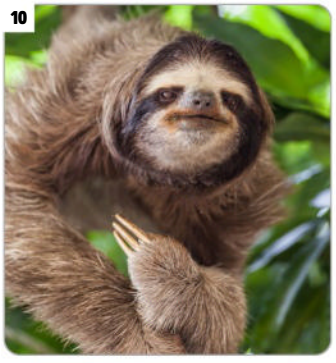
b) Mexico

c) Spain

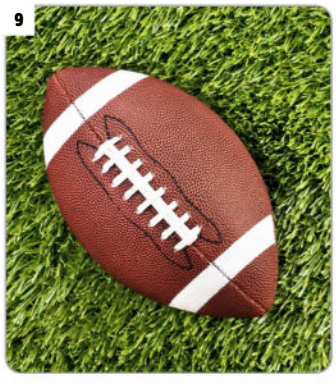
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

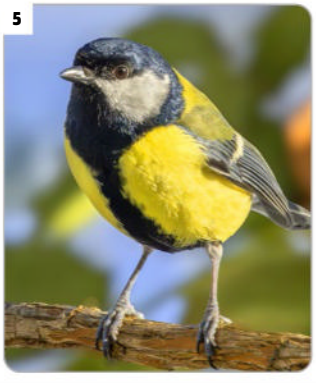
8 True or false? Naked mole rats can live for up to 40 years.

True ☐ False ☐



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.





9 Which college football team won "The Game" this year between Ohio State University and the University of Michigan?

10 True or false? Sloths come down to the ground from their treetops about once a week.

True ☐ False ☐

11 In the new season of the TV show *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, what is the name of Percy's Cyclops half-brother?

a) Tantalus

b) Titanus

c) Tyson

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 True or false? Scientists recently determined that the South Pole–Aitken basin on the Moon is shaped like a diamond.

True ☐ False ☐

13 Which country earned the most medals at this year's Deaflympics?

a) Japan b) US c) Ukraine

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

14 In the book *Ms. Pennypickle's Puzzle Quest*, Benjamin and his brother are on a road trip to what national park?

a) Grand Canyon

b) Yellowstone

c) Yosemite

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

15 A new flavor of Doritos chips was inspired by what holiday treat?

THE WEEK Junior

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